Fall 1980
vol. 6 no. 4

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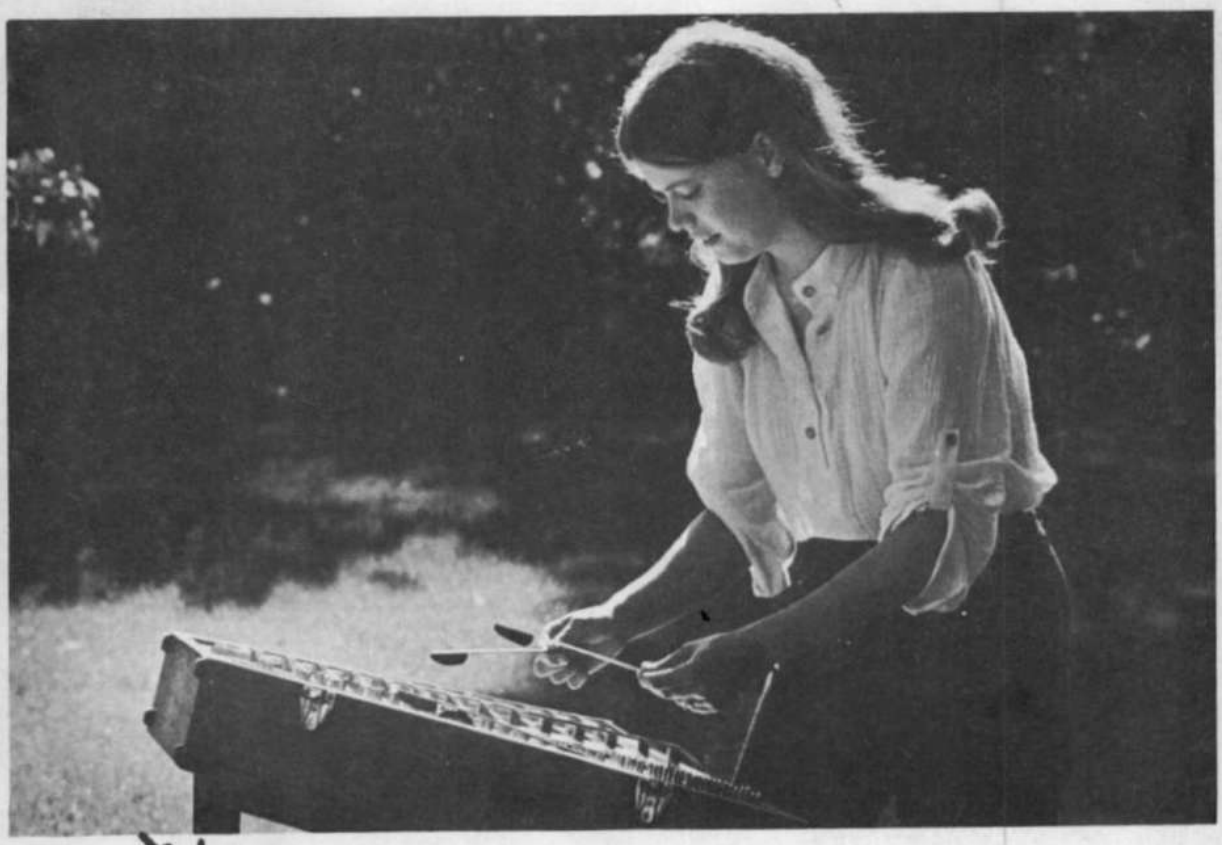


Cathy Barton Para

DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS Volume 6, Number 4, Fall 1980 © All rights reserved.

EDITOR: Madeline MacNeil

DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS
P. O. Box 2164
Winchester, Virginia 22601
(703) 667-3704

The DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS is published four times each year. Issues are mailed to subscribers during the first week of January, April, July and October. Subscriptions are $8 per year. Individual current and back issues are $2 each. For a list of available back issues, contact us.

Advertising in the DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS is good business, for the DPN reaches several thousand hammered and mountain dulcimer folks - builders, players and enthusiasts. Details and rates are available simply by writing and asking for them. AD CLOSING DATES are six weeks prior to publication dates of the DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS.

PLEASE LET OUR ADVERTISERS KNOW THAT YOU FOUND THEM THROUGH THE DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS.

So many people help with the DPN in so many ways. People have walked into my apartment, have seen me at work collating DPN's or pulling labels for a mailing and pitched in. (Wonder why no one comes to see me anymore?) Some of the folks who have helped so much recently are Donna Ford, Judy Basso, Luella Eichhorst, Kathy Geiman, Seth Austen, Gary Westfall, Marty Mayfield, Gayle Mayfield, Sally George and her family, Marsha Kelly, Helen Royall, Tom Cesnik, Jack Robbins, Randy Wilkinson, Pam Wilkinson and Chuck Warnick. If I've forgotten any names, I'll surely include them next time.

The Winter DPN is traditionally a wrap-up of Summer festivals. I'd like to have pictures and stories - please share them. Deadline for the Winter issue is Nov. 15th.

Recently, I've become disturbed about DPN's that don't reach subscribers. I personally go through every name on the mailing list pulling labels. If a card is in the active file (I'd like to think I've never made a mistake with the subscriber file!), a DPN goes out to that person. Obviously, something happens while the DPN is moving through the U.S. Postal Service. All I can say is, please - if you don't receive a DPN, let me know. Another will go out to you via 1st class mail.

Sam Ann Putonem, a dulcimer player from Baltimore, MD, helped and encouraged me many times with the DPN. This vital, young woman went back to school to work toward a law degree - yet still had time for family, music, and friends. Sam participated in the activities during Dulcimer Days in Coshocton, OH in May, and in late June, she died - a shock to all of us who loved her. Sam was my friend. I miss her. This issue of the DPN is lovingly dedicated to her.

Dulcimerrily,

Maddie

Madeline MacNeil, Editor
DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS

DEAR SUBSCRIBER,

IF SO, PLEASE TELL US.

The Bunch of Currants

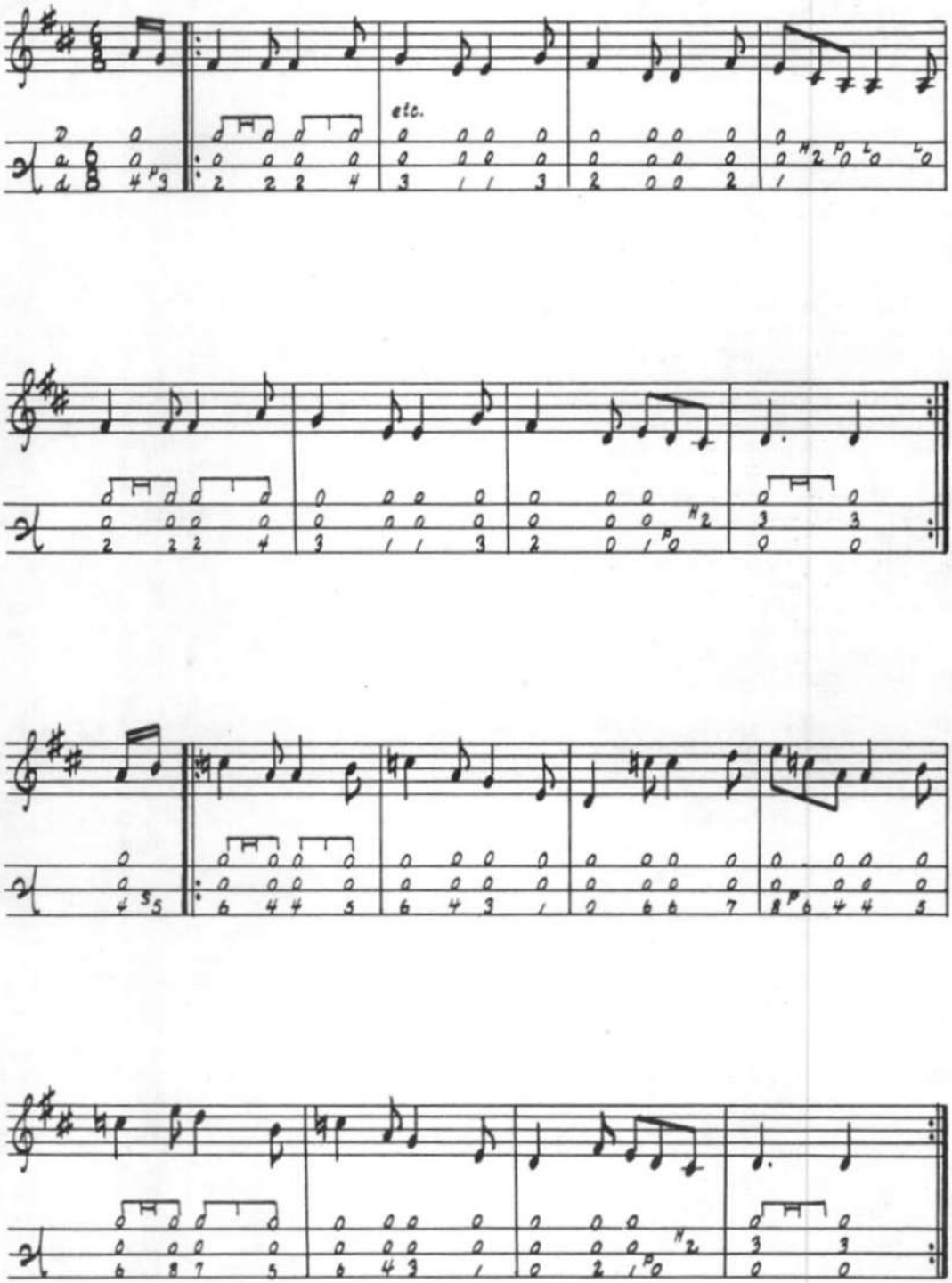
Irish Single Jig

arr. Tom Baehr

The tablature gives the player a suggested strumming pattern. I use a brush stroke with the right index finger, alternating direction as the need arises. Notice that the left hand does some plucking.

Tom Baehr

TUNE: Do Sol Do (DAD)
METER: 6/8



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OLD TIME FIDDLE TUNES FOR THE APPALACHIAN DULCIMER
AUTHOR: Jean Schilling
PUBLISHER: Crying Creek 77-91381

We've waited for this book - and its arrival is welcome indeed. This is not a beginners' dulcimer primer: It is for the Appalachian dulcimer novice who already knows a little about the instrument and is looking for new tunes to learn. Most of the songs included are old-time fiddle tunes and all have been provided both with music notation and with fret numbers for those who do not read music. Partial selections: Kitchen Girl, Sally Goodin, Angeline (the Baker), Old Joe Clark, Sandy River Belle, Little Red Haired Boy, Clinch Mountain, Turkey in the Straw, Bonaparte's Retreat, Liberty, Whiskey Before Breakfast.

IRISH MUSIC FOR THE MT. DULCIMER
AUTHORS: Robert D. Hutchinson
James Corr
PUBLISHER: Silver Spear
ISBN 0-934302-01-4

Perhaps you've thought about trying some of those intricate-sounding Irish tunes you've been hearing but didn't know how to get started. This book is suited for the beginning dulcimer player and for those at an intermediate level who wish to enlarge their repertoire of techniques and tunes. The tunes are presented in two versions - a simple one followed by a more complex setting (tablature - no musical notation). Partial selections: The Wind That Shakes the Barley, Peggy-o, The Boys of Wexford, Whiskey in the Jar, Gypsy, Brady from Strabane, The Sweets of May, Wee Filloori Man, Planxty George Brabazon.

DULCIMER CLASSICKS
AUTHOR: Dorothy May
PUBLISHER: Pioneer Printing Co.

On the cover, there's a picture of Beethoven playing a dulcimer! He probably didn't play one, but you can play some of his melodies on the mountain dulcimer if you study this book. It's written in tablature and musical notation. Dorothy is also the author of "Dulcimer Songbag" and "Dulcimer Songbag for Christmas." Partial selections: Musette in G (Bach), Prelude in F (Chopin), Happy Farmer (Schumann), Theme from Symphony No. 1 (Brahms), To a Wild Rose (MacDowell), Polonaise, Horn Duet No. 4 (Mozart), Vivace Assai (Haydn).

MEET THE FRIENDLY DULCIMER
AUTHOR: David Cross

David Cross is affectionately known as the cardboard dulcimer man. His work with children building instruments and playing them is respected. "Meet the Friendly Dulcimer" is an instruction book for the mountain dulcimer, especially for children.

MIXOLYDIAN MENAGERIE
AUTHORS: LaRaye Cunningham
Sharon Gunter
PUBLISHER: Studio P/R

"Mixolydian Menagerie" is not a method book "per se." It is a collection of songs and duets written in tablature. Since there is a spiral binding and "sideways" page layout, two people can easily play out of the same book. The songs range from children's tunes to composed songs. Partial selections: Go Tell Aunt Rhody, Twinkle Traveler, Dulcimer Duets, Wildwood Flower, St. Anne's Reel, Arkansas Traveler, Turn About, Just to Know, Whisper in Your Ear, With You, Dragon Song, Anderson's Mountain, Treadmill, The Wind, I'm Gonna Make It, La Raye.

HONKY TONKIN' - A Travel Guide to American Music
AUTHOR: Richard Wootton
PUBLISHER: East Woods Press
ISBN 0-914788-26-4

This book takes its readers to cities and towns across America where good music is thriving. For each of the musical centers, Wootton provides everything from local history to listings of clubs and record shops. Additional chapters are devoted to American radio stations, records and record buying, music festivals, and background reading.

MANY BUTTERFLIES
ARTIST: Madeline MacNeil
LABEL: Roots and Branches (RBR-001)

This album is a celebration of the human voice - and the dulcimer, the hammered dulcimer and the guitar. Much of the singing is in harmony with other voices, and includes carols of all seasons, madrigals and other songs which are always young. Selections: Many Butterflies, She Moved Through the Fair, Down in Yon Forest, Lully, Lullay, To Shorten Winter's Sadness, May Day Garland, To Celia/ The Ash Grove, I'll Fly Away, Cambric Shirt, Sing We and Chant It, Planxty Irwin, The Nightingale, Today, My Shepherd Will Supply My Need.

SONGS FROM THE HEARTLAND
ARTISTS: Bill Spencer, with
Debbie Kopp and Ed Simpkins

Bill Spencer presents six of his original compositions along with five old traditional songs. On this album he shares and combines his own singing and playing with Ed Simpkins, a fine singer and guitarist, and with Debbie Kopp, whose banjo, dulcimer and clear singing voice helps to round out a pleasing album. Selections: Fields of Gold, My Home's Across the Blue Ridge Mountains, Back to Old Berea, The Crawdad Song, New Burlington, My Indiana Dream, Keep On the Sunny Side, The Old Arm Chair, The Sycamore Pond, Simple Gifts, and A Little Lot in Colorado.

SONGS FOR CHILDREN
ARTISTS: Sara Melton Keller
Mary Ann Samuels
CASSETTE TAPE

Sara and Mary Ann have performed children's programs in Vermont and here present songs and tunes which have captured many a young audience. The mountain dulcimer is played along with guitar, fretless banjo, autoharp, recorders, pennywhistles, psaltery and limber jack. They are assisted by Bob and Andrea Teer and Jerry Rockwell. Partial selections: Over the Waterfall, The Fox, Swinging Along, Sweet Little Baby, Do What the Spirit Say, Marjorie, Johnson Boys, Ride a Cock Horse, Chiny Doll, Little Birdie, Oh Mary, The Golden Vanity.

A TIME IN OUR LIVES
ARTISTS: Bushnell's Basin Delegation
Bob and Donna Russell

Mountain dulcimers, hammered dulcimers, guitars, bowed psaltery, bass and lots of fine singing are found here. Bob and Donna are assisted by members of the Golden Link Folks Singing Society of Rochester, NY. A booklet containing music, lyrics and information accompanies the album. Selections: Welcome Welcome Every Guest, The Pied Piper, Black Rock Pork, Come Fare Away, Blow Ye Winds in the Morning, Little Brown Church in the Dale, Lady Diamond, Spanish Ladies, Dancing at Whitsun, Greensleeves, Fruit of the Musical Tree, Song of the World's Last Whale, Walk Shepherdess Walk/Marjorie, Time of My Life.

GNAWBONE
ARTISTS: Fred Meyer, Doug Berch
John Vertrees, Mara Kubat
LABEL: Midwest Coast Records (MC-101)

In the Fall/Winter season, one has to look in the Bloomington, IN school system to find Fred Meyer. But in the Summer, chalk boards and notebooks give way to dulcimers and festivals everywhere. Two years ago, his solo album "Rocking Chair" was released. This time, there are more players with him - Doug Berch (dulcimer, vocal, banjo, penny whistle), Jon Vertrees (guitar) and Mara Kubat (vocals). Selections: Pretty Polly/Bedlam, Pine Mountain Jig, Silkie, Rutherford College, If Louise Still Sang Her Sunday Song, Gnawbone, Freeman Shuffle, Lark in the Morning, Female Drummer, Come Give Me Your Hand, Damon, For Sheila, Fare Thee Well.

MT. DULCIMER AND PSALTERY INSTRUMENTALS
ARTISTS: Jerry Rockwell
Mary Ann Samuels
CASSETTE LABEL: Traditional Records
Tape Series TRC 610

It's lovely to hear Jerry and Mary Ann perform. A gentleness born of their personalities shines through. This tape presents them playing solo and together on dulcimer, psaltery and guitar. Partial selections: Flowers of Edinburg/Jamie Allen, Song of the Changer, The Blackbird, Newcastle, O'Farrell's Welcome, Star of County Down/Skye Boat Song/Sidewalks of New York, Road to Lisdoonvarna, Childgrove, Banish Misfortune, Old French, Time Traveller, Southwind/ Baidestroll Balinderry.

FRESH PICKED DULCIMER
ARTIST: J. D. LaBash
CASSETTE TAPE

Ever hear "Autumn Leaves" on a mountain dulcimer? J. D. has won a few dulcimer contest trophies playing that song. This tape has "Autumn Leaves" plus a wide variety of songs and tunes. Partial selections: Dandelion River Run, Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head/Close to You, The Water is Wide, Back on My Mind, Autumn Leaves, Redwing, Wait Till the Sun Shines Nellie/ Bye Bye Blackbird, Bird in a Guilded Cage.

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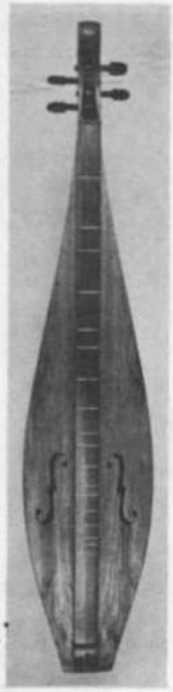

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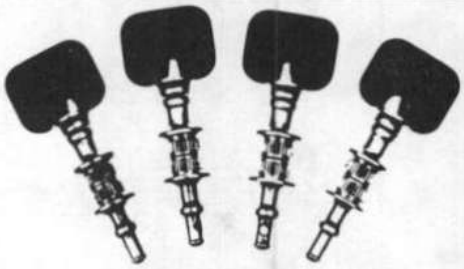

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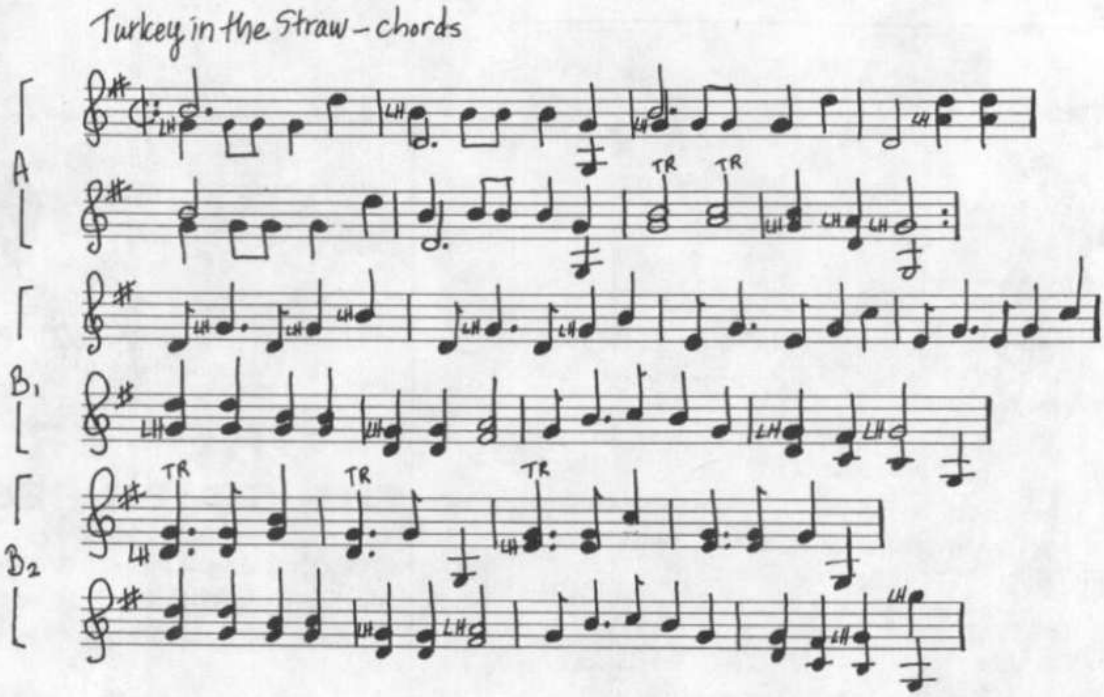
Sam Moffatt

Chording on the Hammered Dulcimer

Have you ever been jamming with a group of other players, perhaps at a festival or party, and wished you could play along, but didn't know the tune? A guitar or bass player would play some chords or bass notes -- you can, too. It may not be the same as really knowing the melody, but chording or accompanying on the hammered dulcimer can have its own kind of excitement. It's free enough to let you play around, making variations each time the melody is repeated. Once you've chorded a melody for awhile, learning it can be a very simple process, since you already know it by ear, and are hitting some of the melody notes in your chords.

Some of my first accompaniments were worked out rather painstakingly while backing up a guitar player who flat-picked fiddle tunes. The more chording I did, the easier it became; patterns and techniques emerged which fit into most traditional melodies. Even if chording doesn't come easily to you at first, continued use will unravel its mysteries.

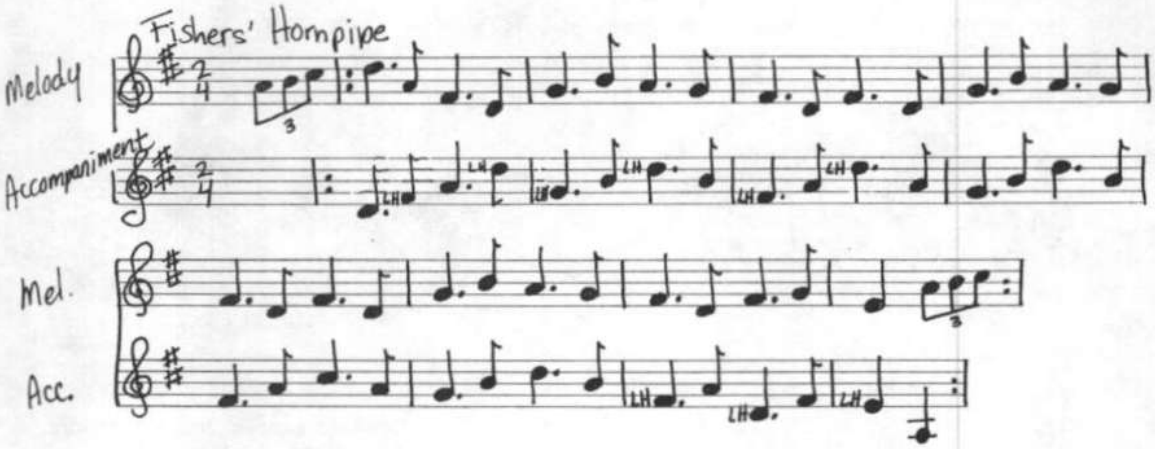
Below is an example of some chording for "Turkey in the Straw" in G. Get someone else to play the melody and try it out.



As you can see, the "B" part contains a harmony which parallels pretty closely the rhythm of the melody. This variation breaks up the repeated use of thirds and fifths. And when used to accompany a fast tune, it can be really fun to do.

For example, try playing a note-for-note harmony to "Fishers Hornpipe," following the melody:

In the "B" part of the hornpipe, you could vary this by striking chords of two beats each.



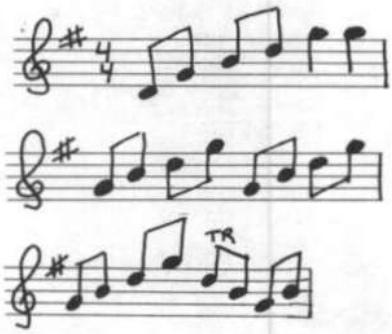
Most of my chords come out of intervals of a third, fourth, or fifth. For simplicity, use just the right side of the treble bridge to try out some suggestions in this paragraph. A D tune usually begins with a D chord; one way to play it would be to strike the D and A above it (a fifth) together. If you need to stay on the D chord for awhile, switch to a F#-A combination. When the melody changes, it will often go to either an A chord or G chord: you can play a simple A chord by striking the E and A above it together; make a G chord by striking the G and B above it. You'll soon find other notes in the bass and high treble range which will fit into these three chords. B minor, another common chord in D-melodies, can be played by striking the F# and the B above it.

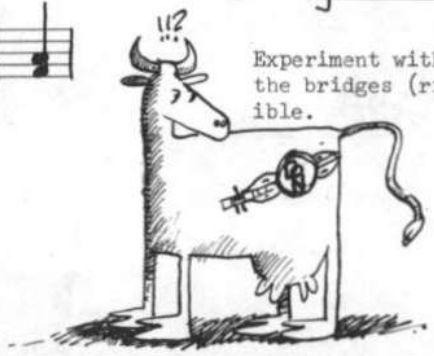
Technique and Rhythmic Patterns

Once you begin to find the chords with ease, you'll also probably want to start doing varied rhythms. Think of other instruments which are used for folk accompaniment and try to imitate their sound. For example, a piano or guitar often backs up a tune in waltz (3:4) time with an oom-pa-pa kind of accompaniment. The pianist would hit a bass note followed by two identical chords in the treble range, in an even 1-2-3 rhythm. You can easily do this, though your chords may sound thinner than a piano's, since you can only hit two notes at once. One way to help this is to vary the two chords. For example, accompaniment to a waltz in D could start:

In other words, on the second and third beats of the measure, you'd play an interval of a fifth and then a third. A more advanced technique is to try to be a "banjo" -- leave out the bass note in the accompaniment and just play chords on the upbeat. For example, with a 4:4 melody, hit the chord twice (rapidly) on the second and fourth beat and rest during the first and third beat:

Arpeggios, or playing the notes in a chord, one after the other, are a wonderful accompaniment to slow, and especially sung melodies. You can simply run up through the chord, or run up and down if you have time. As your arpeggio technique improves, you will be able to use them as highlights in faster melodies as well. Here is an example of some G-chord arpeggios:

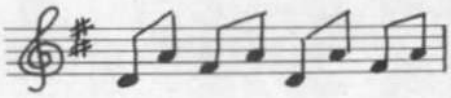




Experiment with playing arpeggios across the bridges (right to left) whenever possible.

Another variation, which really suggests itself, is to simply play intervals of thirds, fourths, or fifths in a "drumming" fashion rather than simultaneously striking them. For example, you could play the D chord:

OR



using your right hand for the A, and your left for the D (a fifth below it). You can keep drumming the A and change the D to an E for a simple change to the A chord. If you increase the speed of the drumming, you will soon have a smooth tremelo going in both hands at once, which creates a whole new and rich texture.

I use chording often when playing solo to break up my melodies -- provide a variation on the second or third repeat. I hope this has helped you get started -- if you've already been doing this, or have any questions, please write me and share your thoughts.

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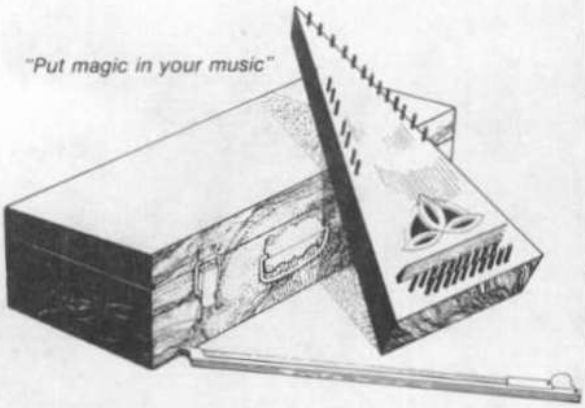

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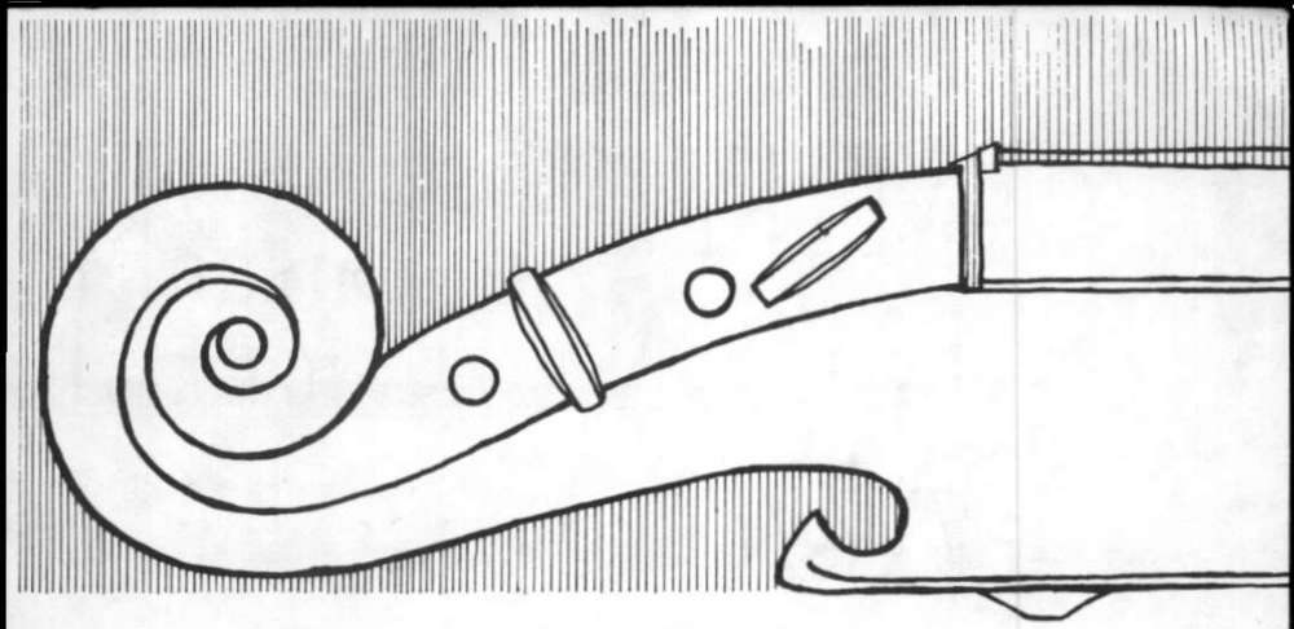

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CATHY BARTON PARA

AN INTERVIEW BY

Susan M. Campbell

Columbia, Missouri

Footsteps of the fair-going crowd shuffle beneath the valences of the Merchant's Tent at Boone County's first annual dulcimer contest. There are personalities in footsteps -- young, old, uncertain or reckless. Some find their way inside, others are lured away by ferris wheels or popcorn stands. An insider patiently waiting for the contest to begin could get to know the other fair-goers merely by listening to the rhythm of their walking as they mill past the tent in the night.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the announcer jostles the audience to attention. "I'd like to introduce to you-all a girl who has become somewhat of a celebrity around these parts. She's been on the Hee-Haw Show and Grand Ole Opry. Cathy Barton Para!" The preliminaries of the contest commence with a performance from one of folk music's premier dulcimer players.

Cathy obviously enjoys sharing her music with audiences. As she plays, you begin to realize that a dulcimer plays much more than a melody with an accompanying drone. There is an energetic thrumming rhythm that is the baseline, the ground from which a dulcimer song can grow and bloom. Cathy nurtures this with her repertoire of strums that change pace and direction -- just like the footsteps of the crowds milling outside the tent the night of the first annual dulcimer contest at the Boone County Fair.

When did you first get interested in dulcimers?
You mean both kinds, mountain and hammered dulcimer?

Which came first?
The mountain dulcimer I started playing first. I hadn't heard of the mountain dulcimer until about four years ago, when I first saw one at the Ozark Folk Center. I started playing the hammered dulcimer after I had played the mountain dulcimer awhile. My first exposure to hammered dulcimer was seeing an album by Jay Round in the dulcimer shop in Mountain View, but I really didn't take much interest in the instrument until I heard Bill Spence's record with Fenning's All-Star String Band on KOPN (a local listener-supported radio station). I was so intrigued, I called into the station and asked them, "What in the heck is that?," and I went and bought the record. There was a picture of a dulcimer on the back and I really wanted to get one. We had a lead in Kansas City, but the instruments there were pretty small. My dad said he thought he could make one, so he pretty well based it on the picture on the back of the album. Bill Spence has really been an inspiration to me.

How do you approach the dulcimer?
Well, I'm pretty much a traditionalist if that's what you mean. I pretty much stick to the old tunes -- I'm not what you would consider a progressive player. My interest is in old folk songs.

Do you pick up tunes from fiddle tunes or other dulcimer tunes?
Either one. Primarily from fiddle tunes, but I have learned both ways.

You were good friends with an old-time fiddler in Mountain View.
You mean Kermit Moody? Kermit was also a tremendous inspiration to me. He was one of the first people I really got to know in Mountain View and he accepted me. He knew I was interested in that kind of music so he asked me to play in his band at the Folk Center. Then he said he wanted tapes of my music, so I started sending him tapes of songs that I did. He was really interested in what I was doing.

Did you pick up any songs from him?
He taught me a couple like "Oklahoma Waggoner" which I have really not heard many people play. But for the most part, he gave me an in to the people at Mountain View.

How about Ramona Jones (wife of Grandpa Jones)?
Ramona is somebody else who helped me a lot down there. If it weren't for Ramona, I doubt that I would have ever stayed down at the Ozark Folk Center permanently during the summers.

How did your first album come about?
Jay asked me to do that. I played in Washington, D.C. with Jay Round at the Red Fox Inn at Bethesda, Maryland. Ron Penix, a hammered dulcimer player, was in the audience. He was intrigued by what we did, and later talked with Jay about helping him with an album. Ultimately, I played on "A Hammered Dulcimer Reunion" with Ron and Jay. The very first thing I ever recorded was one cut on an album called "The Walnut Valley Spring Thing." "Movin' On Down the River" was released in 1979.

Do you play the hammered dulcimer more now?
A lot more. The instrument excites me just a little bit more than the mountain dulcimer, but I love both of them. I really do. The hammered dulcimer is also easier for me to play and comes to me a little more naturally than the mountain dulcimer.

Do you have any words of advice for people starting out on hammered dulcimer?
I have tried to teach people the instrument and I would say to start very methodically and slowly. People will learn tunes on the dulcimer, taking them lickety-split, and the next thing you know, they become frenetic, and after awhile tend to lose interest. To play the hammered dulcimer you must be prepared to spend hours getting the instrument tuned. It takes half an hour to an hour to tune it.

How often do you have to tune it?
This summer, I needed to tune mine five times which is pretty amazing. It's a long process and I don't enjoy it, but it's something that must be done. I keep it in tune at all times because an out-of-tune hammered dulcimer sounds --weird. I would say to play it slowly and to take it easy, because it's a beautiful instrument and you don't have to play every tune fast. The temtation is to do that. When you play really fast, it can be an overpowering bunch of sound that comes from this thing. The notes all mesh and it starts sounding strange, it just doesn't sound pretty after that point. So, let the notes ring. One note will ring for a period of time and that is pretty in, and of, itself. I tried that with "Going Home" from Dvorak's NEW WORLD SYMPHONY on the album "Moving On Down The River". I played the song slowly, hitting single notes. I wanted to present the dulcimer simply, without the frills. I don't know if I was entirely successful. I'll have to find out what people think.

Where did the hammered dulcimer come from?
They're ancient. I would say maybe Persia. They were a Hebrew traditional instrument, I know that. They are found all over the world. I've seen Greek instruments that look like dulcimers, called "santouri." In Iran, it's called a "santur" and in Korea, it's called a "yangchin." It's got 45 different names. I've learned that the instrument was played in the Colonies for street music, dancing, things like that.

Who started popularizing it?
Henry Ford liked this instrument and promoted it in his dance orchestra. It died out, I think, because it is hard to tune and it has always been looked upon as kind of an oddity instrument. A lot of people are trying to change that - people like Jay Round.

So Jay Round, you think, is one of the people who has popularized the hammered dulcimer?
He's one. But I think the person who got a lot of people started would be a fellow by the name of Chet Parker in Michigan. He died some years back. He inspired Jay to play, and also Howie Mitchell, who wrote those manuals on how to build a hammered dulcimer. And then the person who got a lot of people started, of course, is Bill Spence. And, certainly, Ed Trickett's been an inspiration to me.

Do you foresee any change in the direction of your music in the future; are you going to move away from traditional music?
No. I have no desire to leave it and that does not seem to be the case with a lot of my friends. They deal with it and then seem to grow weary of it after a while. But my whole interest is in folklore, so I doubt that I will ever leave traditional music. I've always been intrigued with the music in Nashville, however. Maybe I could mix the kind of music I am doing with the music in Nashville. I like to experiment with sounds. I also love to present music to people, to teach, to talk about what I'm doing -- to get other people excited.

Cathy recently received her masters degree in Folk Studies (Historical Preservation) from Western Kentucky State University. She is presently living in Columbia, Missouri with her husband, David Para.

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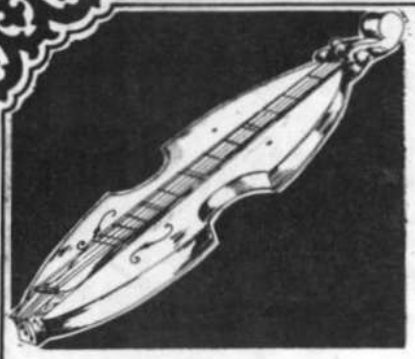

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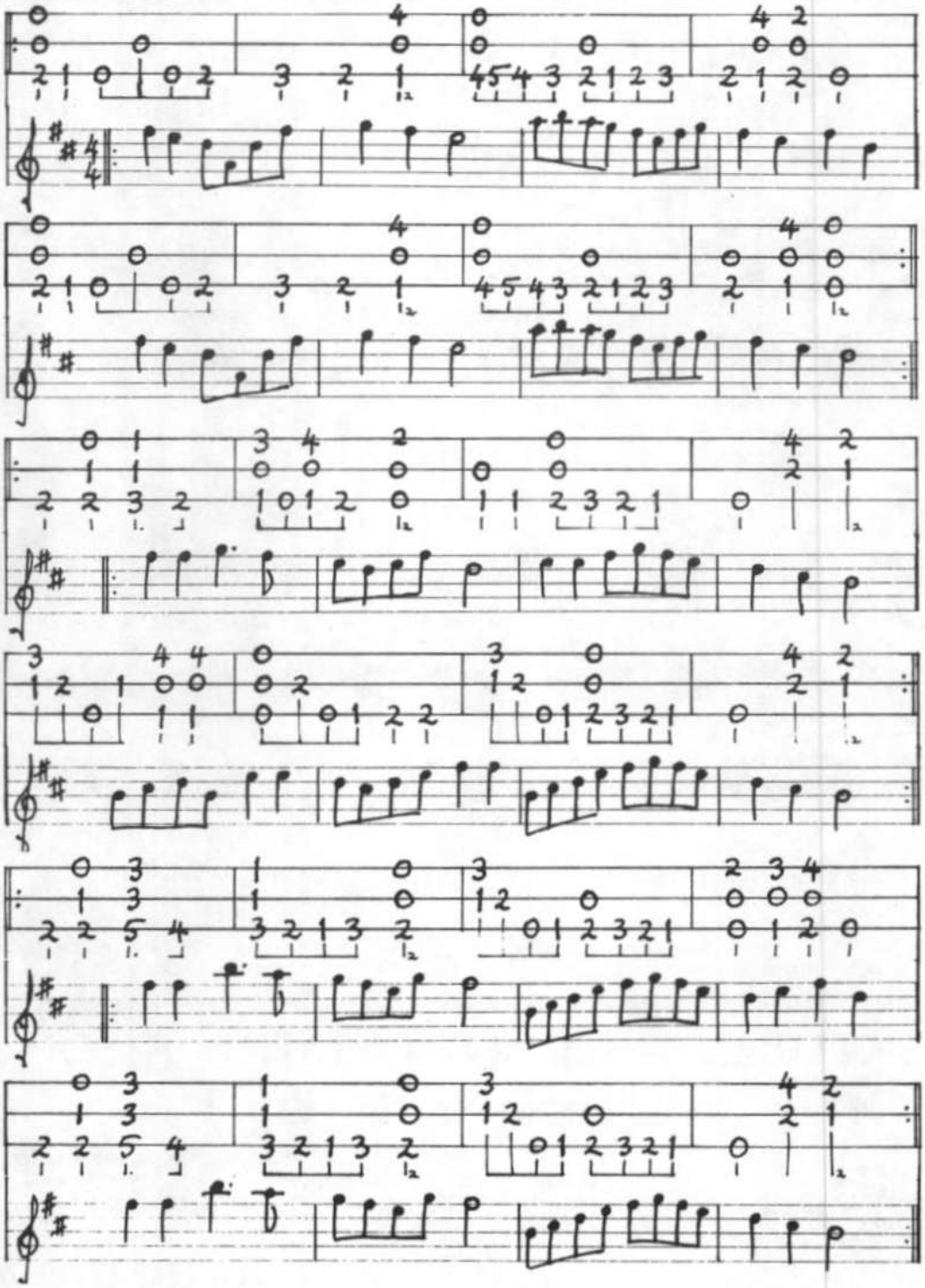
Plant un Cao

TUNE: Do Sol Do (D A D)
METER: 4/4

Traditional French Schottishe
arranged by JOHN MOLINEUX



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JUST AND PYTHAGOREAN INTONATION

Dan Rich

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JUST AND PYTHAGOREAN INTONATION

STRING LENGTH 100.0000
DATE 04-04-80

FRET	JUST FROM NUT	JUST FROM PREVIOUS	PYTHAGOREAN FROM NUT	PYTHAGOREAN FROM PREVIOUS
1	11.112	11.112		
2	20.000	8.888		
3	25.000	5.000		
4	33.333	8.333		
5	40.000	6.667		
6	44.445	4.445	43.750	3.750
6.5	46.666	2.221	47.325	3.575
7	50.000	3.334		
8	55.556	5.556		
9	60.000	4.444		
10	62.500	2.500		
11	66.667	4.167		
12	70.000	3.333		
13	72.223	2.223	71.875	1.875
13.5	73.334	1.111	73.663	1.788
14	75.000	1.666		
15	77.778	2.778		
16	80.000	2.222		
17	81.250	1.250		

In a past DPN (vol. 2, no. 4) Simon Spalding wrote an article regarding Just Intonation and gave numberical ratios for fret placement based upon such. His comments were good and worth investigating but his ratios, past the first octave, had some errors in them. A few of the ratios he published were accurate values out of sequence and others were simply wrong.

I've put the thing into computer language (IBM assembler) and have a program which will give accurate measurements for the placement of frets based on the string length desired. By listing the results of the program run for a string length of 100 I've made it possible for you to move the decimal point of each value in the table two places to the left and multiply by your particular string length to produce your own dulcimer fretboard set-up table based on Just Intonation.

Let me explain how to use my listing in a little more detail. The column labeled 'just from nut' gives a measurement from the nut to each particular fret. For the convenience of those who do not possess a very long measuring instrument of great accuracy, I added the two columns labeled 'just from previous' and 'pythagorean from previous'. These numbers represent the distance between two consecutive frets. Keep in mind, though, if you set frets by only measuring distances from one fret to the next that it is a certainty you will exagerate errors if you consistently estimate in the same direction. A long accurate measuring tool is best. Also, don't put your bridge at its exact theoretical location. To compensate for string stretching at the time a note is fretted you must move the bridge back until it gives a fretted note at the 12th fret equal in pitch to the mid-point harmonic.

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Simon Spalding originally used 'pythagorean' in reference to alternate values for frets 6, 6.5, 13, 13.5. These values revolve about something known as 'The Comma of Pythagoras'.* I don't claim to know all there is to know about this particular subject and don't have time or space to go into what I do know. For your first try at any other than chromatic fretboard however, I'd recommend using a pythagorean 6 -13 and a just 6.5 - 13.5.

By the way, I've had correspondence with people regarding my equal tempered chromatic fret program (it's called CHROMA - the new one is JUST). Some want to know why the ratio in my article is different from Howie Mitchell's in The Mountain Dulcimer - how to make and play it after a fashion. My article (DPN vol. 5, no. 4) showed this and I can't find time to go into greater detail by mail. If it helps to ease your mind as to the veracity of my analysis though, Howie agrees with the math and in fact came to the same conclusion long before I did but after the publication of his Folk Legacy book and record.

I will still send out listings from the computer for any of the methods of 'Intonation' or 'Tuning' I have described. Cost is 50¢ per string, but you can always do it yourself. I welcome inquiry by phone.

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*Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians 5th edition Eric Blom St. Martin's Press Inc. New York
See the topics: Just Intonation, Intervals, Greek Music (Ancient), Temperments

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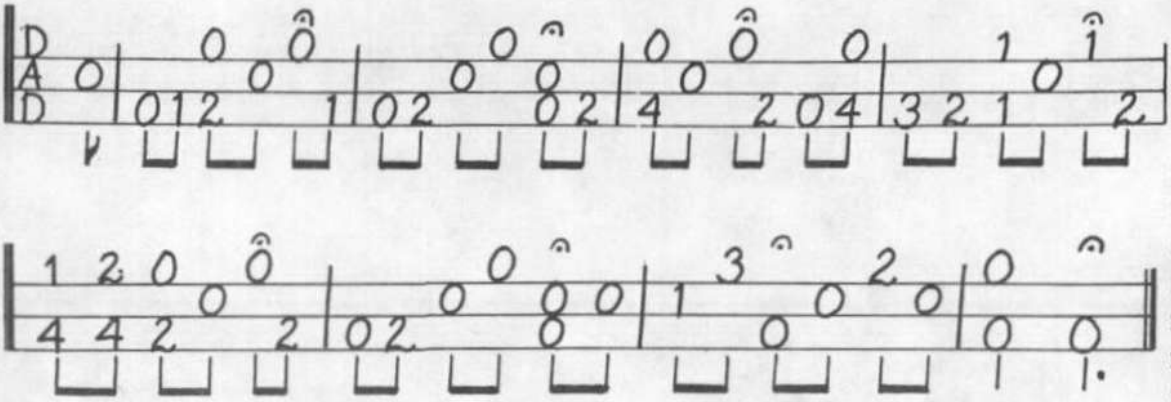
Ohio Melody

Perhaps some DPN reader could help me identify a hauntingly beautiful tune I ran across in a book of sight-singing exercises, identified only as being from Ohio. Is it part of a song? Are there words? I've made it a simple dulcimer piece and play it finger-picked or strummed: without the holds, with free-form holds, or with holds of one beat (which makes it an unusual asymetric 4/4).

Tune: Do Sol Do (D A D)
Meter: 3/4

Traditional (?)
Arr. Jim Burrill
(Arrgmt. C 1980 JNB)



Jim Burrill
567 Farley St.
Mt. View, CA 94043

FRETS

What is it that makes one dulcimer feel much more playable than another? The height of the action makes a difference, a medium scale length helps too, but the main reason lies in the actual gauge of the frets fitted. A great deal has been written about accurate placing, etc., but the question of fret dimensions seems to have been largely overlooked.

I've seen dulcimers with all types of banjo, mandolin and guitar fretwire, and for playing with a noter, this is not too critical, although smaller frets are perhaps easier for sliding. But use the fingers and the difference is immediately noticeable; small frets now make the strings sluggish and even the tone loses its clarity. Conversely, larger frets make for a snappy action as the strings leave them faster, the feel is more positive and the sound improves, due to the angle of the string being more acute when pressed down. To take this to an extreme, notice the massive raised frets of a sitar - necessary for maximum manipulation of the melody strings.

During the past months, I've been experimenting with different gauges on various dulcimers. Finally, I've settled on a 2.8 mm high crown guitar fret as suiting me best; it has also reduced mistakes in playing and eased difficult pieces.

I hope this will be of interest to other players and especially makers, and that it will lead to some replies in the DPN.

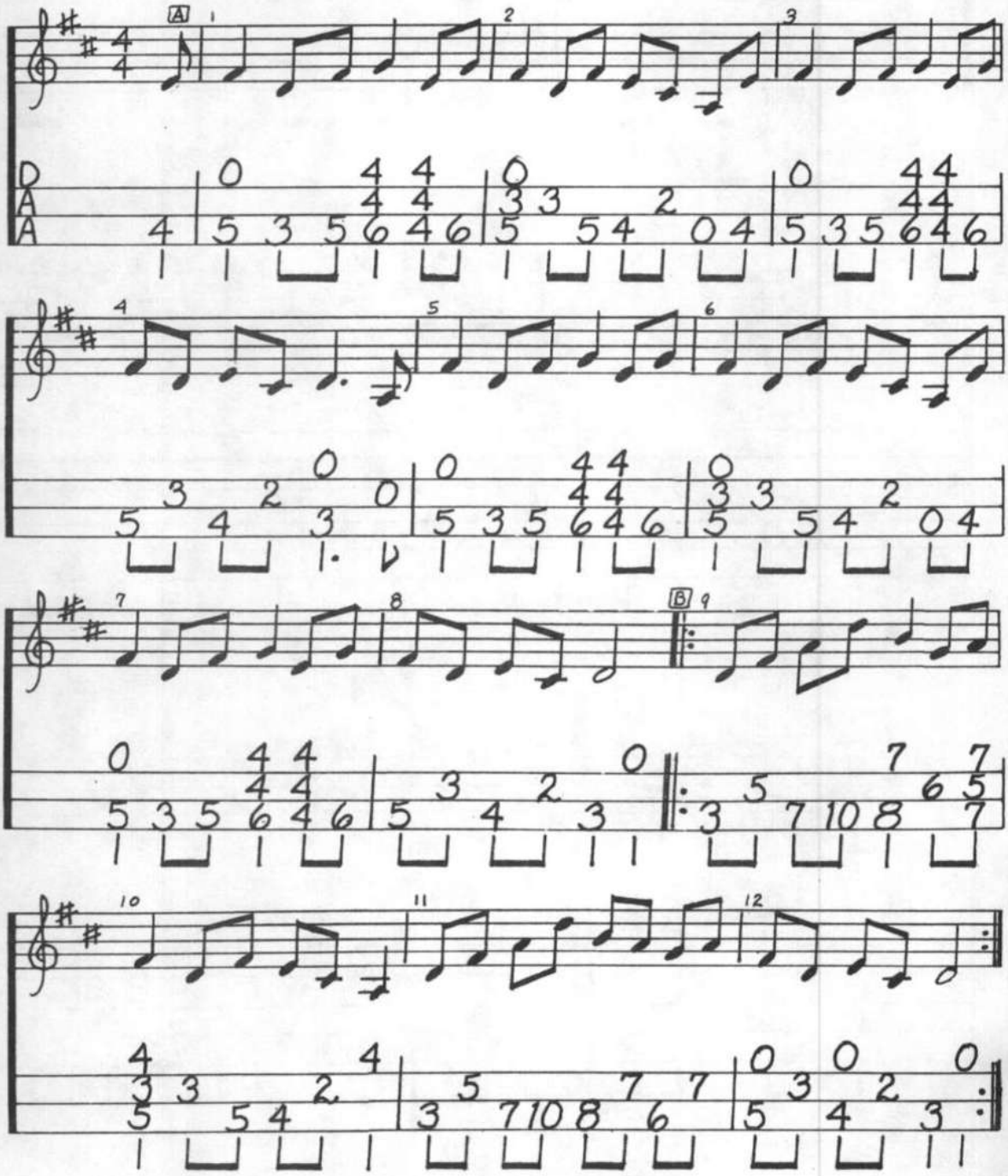
Roger Nicholson
London, England

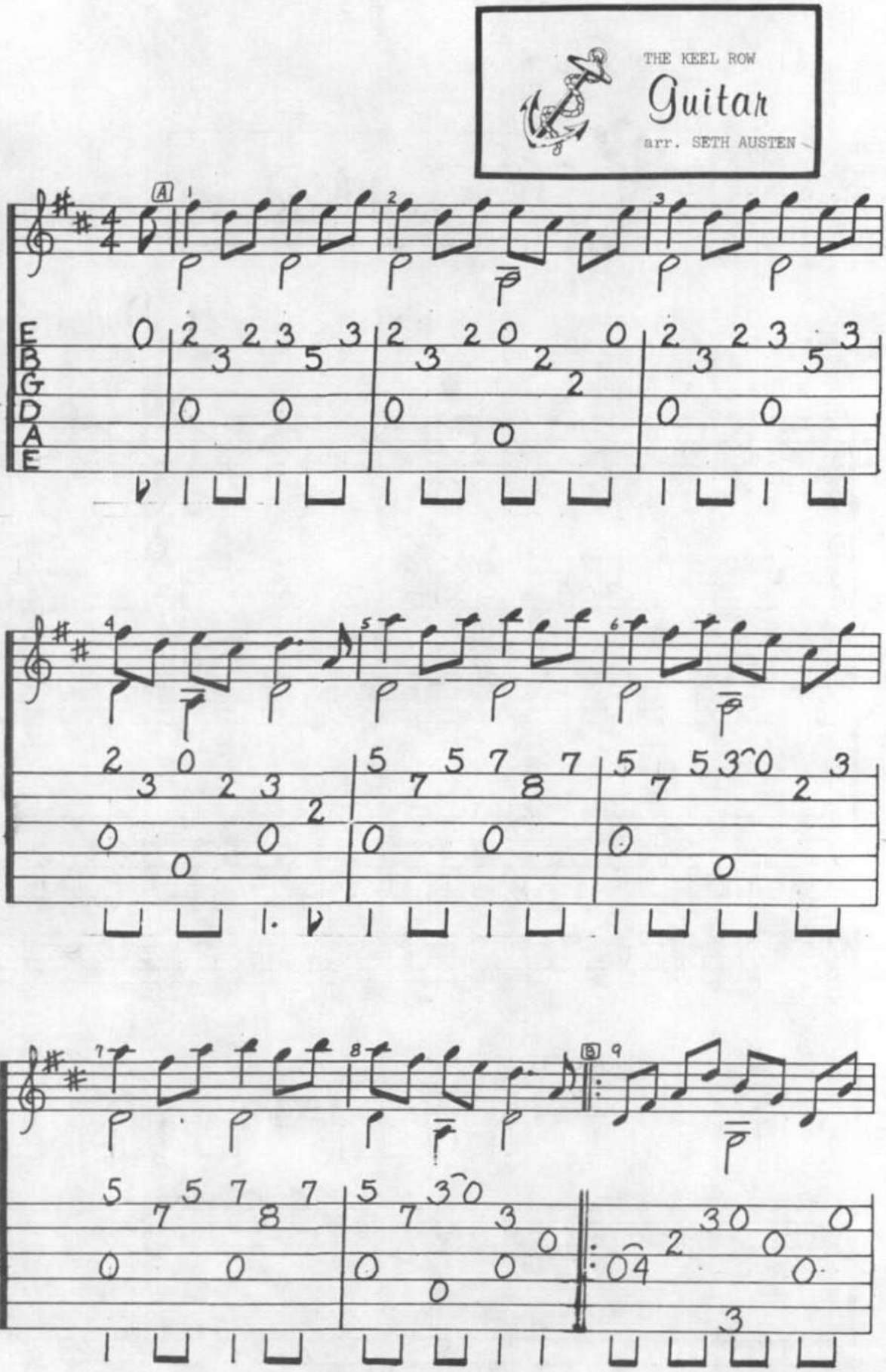
The Keel Row

TUNE: Do Sol Sol (D A A)
METER: 4/4

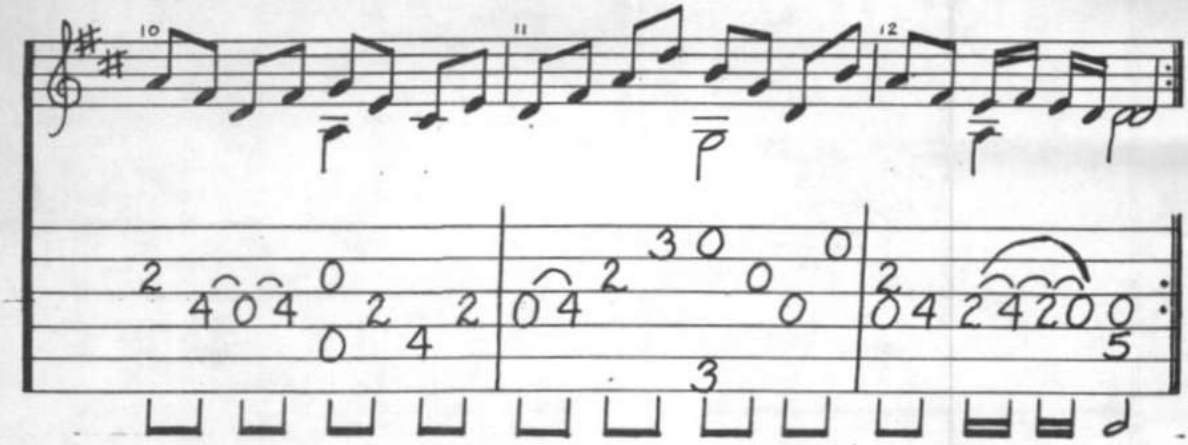
Mt. Dulcimer

arr. MADELINE MacNEIL




THE KEEL ROW
Guitar
arr. SETH AUSTEN
A
B
E
B
G
D
A
E

THE KEEL ROW
Guitar Part Continued



The keel is a small rowboat local to the rivers Tyne and Wear in Northumbria. The tune to "The Keel Row" is also known as "Smiling Polly". The song is recorded for dulcimer and voice on DULCIMER: MORE OLD TIME AND TRADITIONAL MUSIC, an album by Ralph Lee Smith.

Notes on playing the dulcimer part: Try using your fingers rather than a pick. When I play the song with a guitarist, I generally play a chordal harmony on the B part since the melody is played on the guitar.

Notes on playing the guitar part: The guitar should be finger-picked and lightly played.

As I came through Sandgate
Through Sandgate, through Sandgate,
As I came through Sandgate
I heard a lassie sing.
(Repeat)

Chorus:
Weel may the keel row
The keel row, the keel row.
Weel may the keel row
That my laddie's in.
(Repeat)

He wears a blue bonnet
Blue bonnet, blue bonnet.
He wears a blue bonnet
And a dimple in his chin
(Repeat)

(Repeat Chorus)

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Notes

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When I was a child, I wondered where mayonnaise came from. Did it flow from trees like maple syrup? Or did unsuspecting desert travelers sometimes find mayonnaise in a giant cactus rather than water? I always had an active imagination! Somehow I didn't picture someone, or some machine, combining oil, eggs and other ingredients. Jars of mayonnaise simply appeared in the store.

The DPN is somewhat like mayonnaise. Even though an issue arrives at a subscriber's door assembled, stapled and trimmed, it arrives at my door in ten stacks of flat paper. I've often spent ten intense days each three months just putting things together. Unsuspecting friends have sometimes faced this mountain of paper with me. In the meantime, correspondence has piled up, ideas for the DPN stayed in my mind as collating duties consumed over one month of my time each year.

The DPN will now cost $8 per year - the first increase since Summer 1977. You, unfortunately, are paying extra for what inflation has done to us all. But you are also paying about 25¢ each three months to help automate some of the DPN mailing duties. And that I hope you don't mind doing. Thank you for supporting our DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS.

Are you missing an issue of DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS because it simply didn't arrive? Issues aren't late - ever. But now and then the gremlins get two or three copies or the post office machines eat them for lunch. If your DPN doesn't arrive after a resonable interlude (or unreasonable interlude, if you're anxious), let us know. Another DPN will be sent to you via 1st class mail. What is a reasonable interlude? It depends on where you live. The DPN is sent 3rd class mail during the first week of each quarter. It can take 5-6 weeks to reach the West Coast.

Want to be in the DPN file for dulcimer players, builders and teachers? Send us an index card giving your name, address, telephone number, and the information about the instruments you play, teach or build. Want to know of dulcimer players, builders or teachers in your area? Please call and we'll share that DPN file with you.

IN THE TRADITION is a new bi-monthly magazine for folk musicians. The first issue was released in August, 1980. The magazine will cover all aspects of folk and ethnic music, including articles on topics ranging from Tex-Mex and Irish to Southern Appalachian and French Canadian music, focusing on performers, musical intruments and past traditions. Subscriptions (U.S.) are $9.50 for one year, $18.00 for two years. IN THE TRADITION, P. O. Box 19, Kingston, NJ 08528.

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There are some old DPN article reprints, both hammered and mountain dulcimer, that we'd be pleased to send to readers requesting them. There's no charge, except 35¢ for postage and an envelope.

Speaking of reprints, in accordance with your requests, Volume 1, Numbers 1 and 2 of the DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS have been reprinted. You can order them from the DPN for $2.00 each.

Have you discovered the DPN classified ads? They don't cost much and can help readers promote albums, books, instruments and even publicize tours and other events. Use your imagination.

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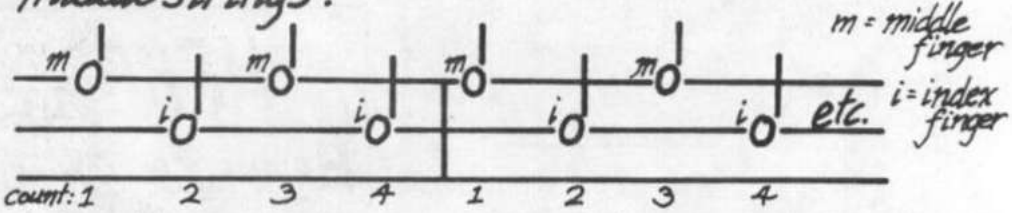
Finger Picking the Mountain Dulcimer

»Jerry Rockwell«

There are many different styles and approaches to fingerpicking on the dulcimer. The one I will show in this issue concerns alternating the bass and middle strings:



I have used the tune "Jamie Allen" to illustrate this alternating pattern. I suggest that you use the first version to get the melody in your head + fingers thoroughly before you go on to the alternating picking.

A Few Observations and Suggestions

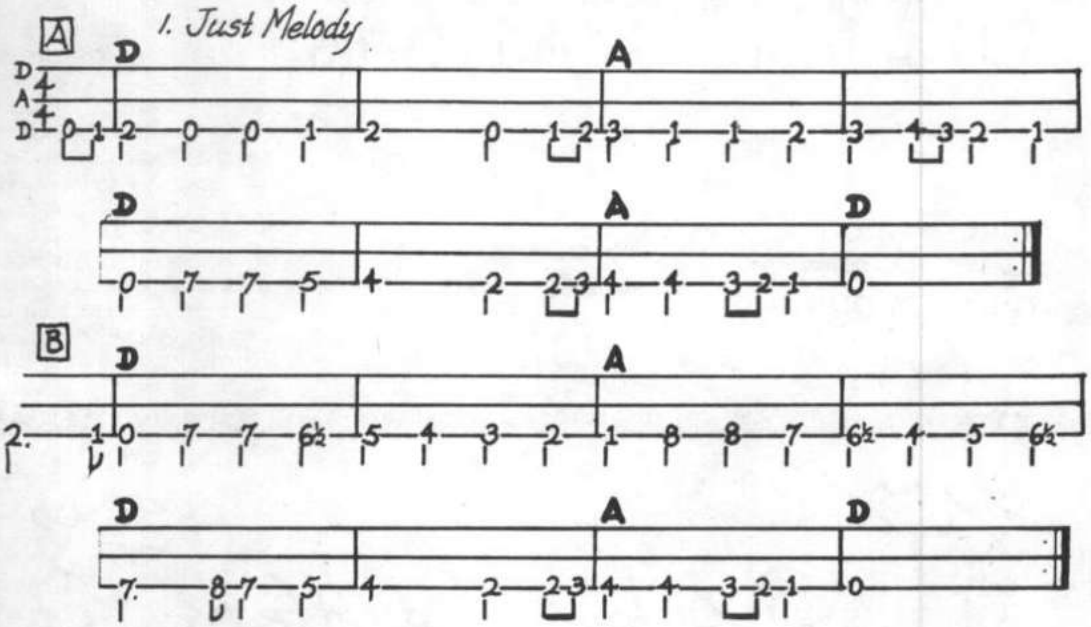
— I have conceived this arrangement in TWO lines of music: stems pointing UP are the alternating bass or accompaniment, stems pointing DOWN are melody notes.

— Try to be aware of chord changes (D, A, etc. above tablature) as these are reflected in the accompaniment "alternating" picking.

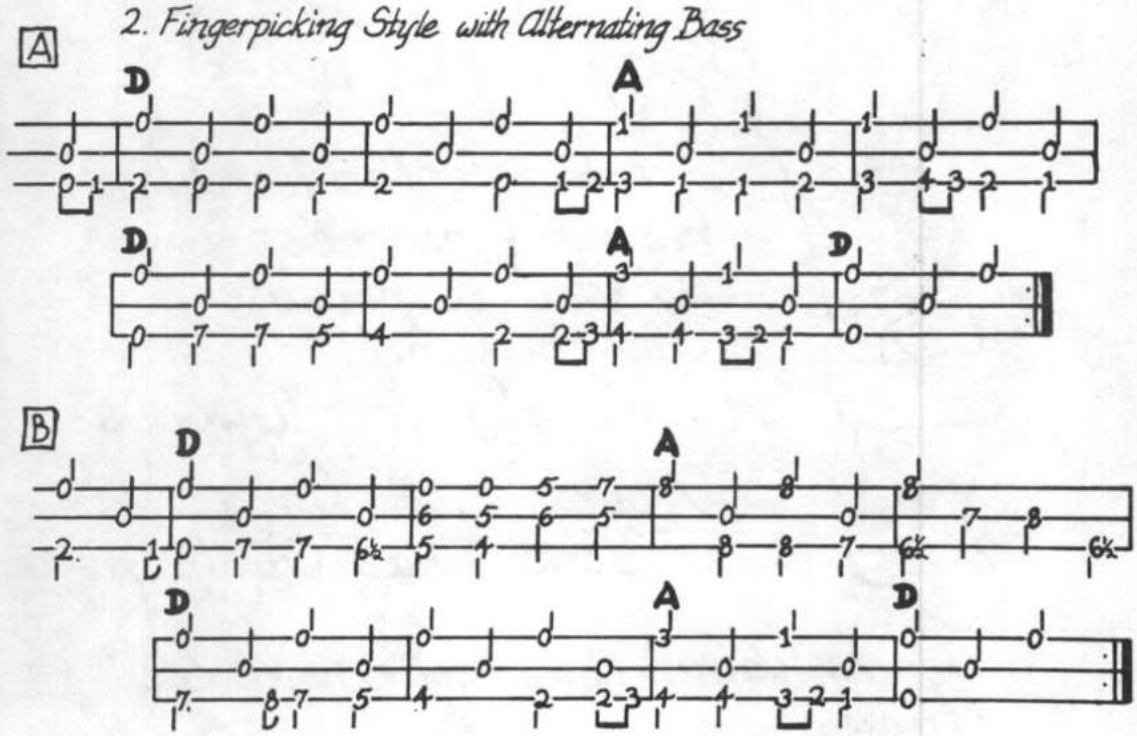
— Adjustments/interruptions in the alternating pattern are inevitable (as in the B part) but try to be as consistent as possible. Beware of re-entry into the pattern with the middle string on your 1st + 3rd beats instead of the bass string. This gives a rather unbalanced overall sound.

Jamie Allen

1. Just Melody



2. Fingerpicking Style with Alternating Bass



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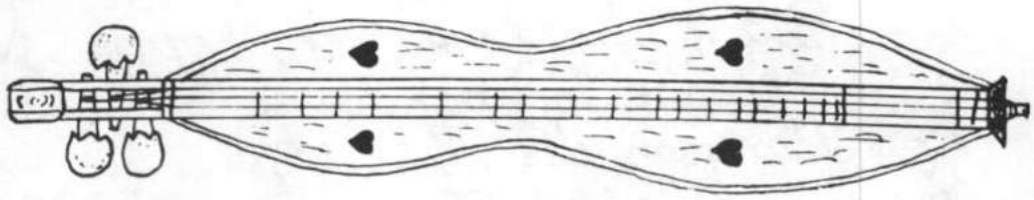

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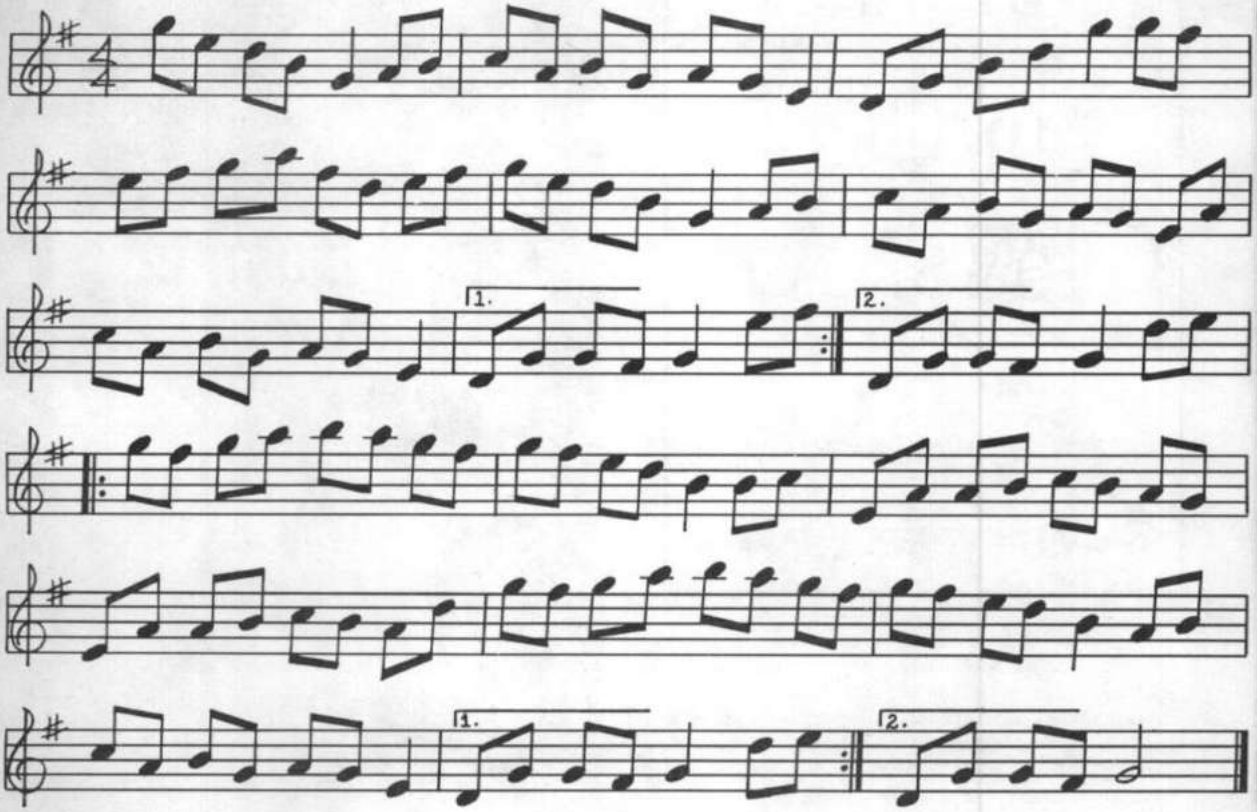
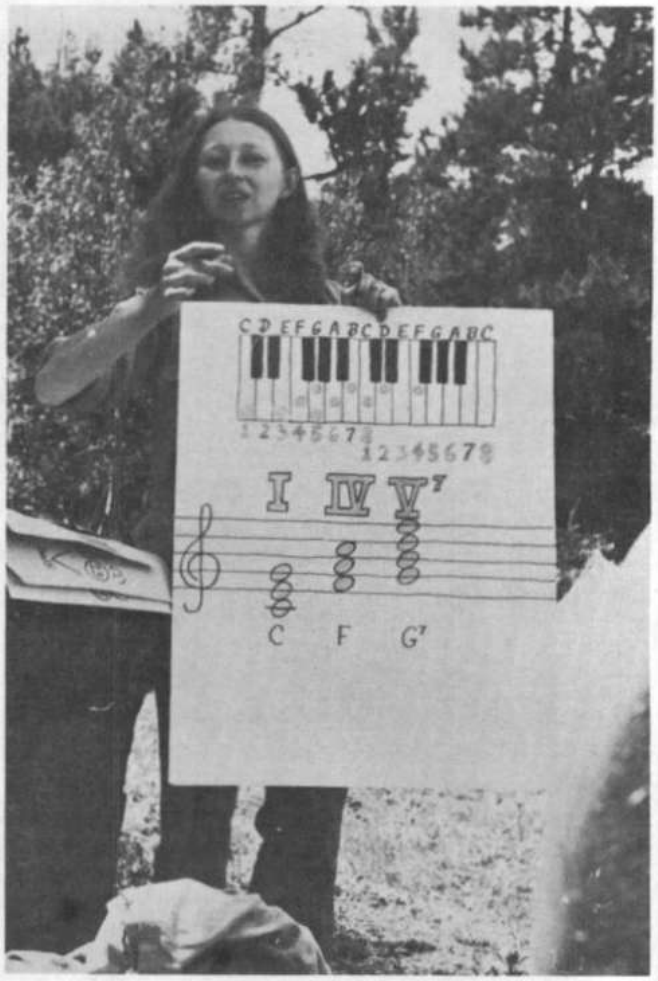


Dulcimer in the Classroom

RICHARD C. BERG
Oregon College of Music
Monmouth, Oregon



Teachers of music in public schools and colleges are discovering the dulcimer to be a valuable instrument for use in the classroom. Reports from all parts of the country describe the development of dulcimer groups in elementary, junior high, and senior high schools as well as in colleges. In secondary schools the dulcimer is being introduced mainly in general music classes, and in colleges in courses that teach fundamentals of music and teaching methods. Music teachers are observing the enthused response of their students, especially by those students with little or no previous musical performance experience.

I have found equally enthused reactions from graduate music students, ones who teach in public schools during the year and take college courses during summer sessions leading to certification requirements and masters' degrees. A number have gone back after summer dulcimer courses to initiate dulcimer classes in their schools with marked success.

As national chairman for the Music Educators National Conference* convention held last April in Miami Beach, I presented two dulcimer sessions which were well attended and received with enthusiasm. Questions and requests for information as to how to organize and operate school dulcimer programs indicated the desire of a number of teachers to start programs in their schools or colleges. A videotape of dulcimer classes I teach at Oregon College of Education was sent on request to persons in widely scattered areas who intended to inaugurate classes this fall.

I began experimenting three years ago with the use of the dulcimer in college music fundamentals classes. With no class method available, an approach was devised to suit our special needs. My classes run in size from thirty-five to as large as forty-five. Many students in these classes have little or no prior music reading experience; therefore, a three-step plan was devised to move them gradually and smoothly from simplified to standard notation: (1) number notation, (2) letter name notation, and (3) standard notation using the treble clef. Rhythmical notation progresses from simple to the more sophisticated and often syncopated rhythmic patterns found in folk and popular music.

The numbering system for identifying the various pitches differs from conventional fret numbering found in other dulcimer books. (I teach fret numbering later in the course, so that students may read from books

*The Music Educators National Conference is the national professional organization for public school and college music teachers.

using tablature notation. The transition has caused no problems and students do not object having to learn two systems, as they are aware of the relative virtues of each system.) One reason for the departure from the traditional notational system (tablature) is that the numbers as we use them relate to scale degrees and reinforce the concepts of scale and model patterns (e.g., half-steps between 3 and 4 and 7 and 8 in the major scale pattern) and aid in training the ear for the development of sight-singing skills.

A second reason for use of the number system is its simplicity to learn and use. Beginners are taught to observe fret placement as a visual aid, in the same manner that piano key patterns are learned (e.g., C is the white key immediately to the left of two black keys; F is the white key to the left of three black keys). Beginners are taught to observe that the spaces between frets 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 9 and 10, and 12 and 13 are narrower than adjacent spaces between frets. They quickly discern that what we call 1 is the narrow space between frets 3 and 4, that 1 an octave higher is also a narrow space (between frets 9 and 10). In the same manner, the eye quickly spots the two narrow spaces (5-6) (12-13) that locate the middle and high octaves of the note F.

Pitches below these middle-register notes are indicated by the notational system used for other classroom instruments, a line over the number (or letter) for upper-octave notes and a line under the number (or letter) for low-register notes:*

By use of this notational system and by tuning dulcimers to C scale (Ionian mode) tuning, all classroom instruments (recorders, bells, autoharps, etc.) may be compatibly taught and used together in ensembles.

Group dulcimer instructional methods, while efficient for teaching many students simultaneously, inhibit the free, unfettered exploration and discovery promoted by individual folk ways of learning to play. To counter this tendency, students should be constantly encouraged to improvise, to create, to try various strums or melodic embellishments, to trust their own musical ears and tastes, to listen and create their own special version of any given tune. Also plans need to include the encouragement of individual and small group (duets, trios, and so on) practice and performance (with little or no teacher guidance).

Dulcimer in the classroom offers an unusual opportunity to develop folk-like ensembles, using whatever instruments are available. Some of your students may be learning guitar, violin, or perhaps play harmonicas and other self-taught instruments. Most classrooms are equipped with autoharps, bells, and percussion instruments. Recorder is often taught in general music. Combining these instruments into ensembles provides a delightful experience for the many students who have not had such opportunities otherwise, and develops their appreciation and understanding of the varied textures and tone colors obtainable through arranging music for combinations of instruments.

Creative teachers will develop other methods of notation, other innovative uses of the dulcimer, and arrange and create music adding to the present repertoire. It matters not so much whether a teacher uses tablature notation, the notation described herein, or prefers to teach by rote, so long as students are guided toward a common goal: the enjoyment of playing the dulcimer and having sufficient skill and confidence to express themselves musically alone and in the company of musical friends.

RICHARD C. BERG
Professor of Music
Creative Arts Dept.
Oregon College of Music
Monmouth, OR 97361

*For a more detailed explanation of this notational system, refer to Play and Sing the Dulcimer Way, Richard C. Berg, Harris Music Publications, 1978.

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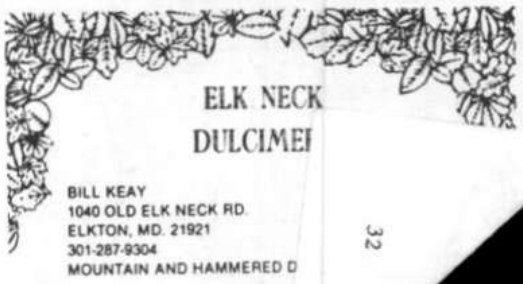
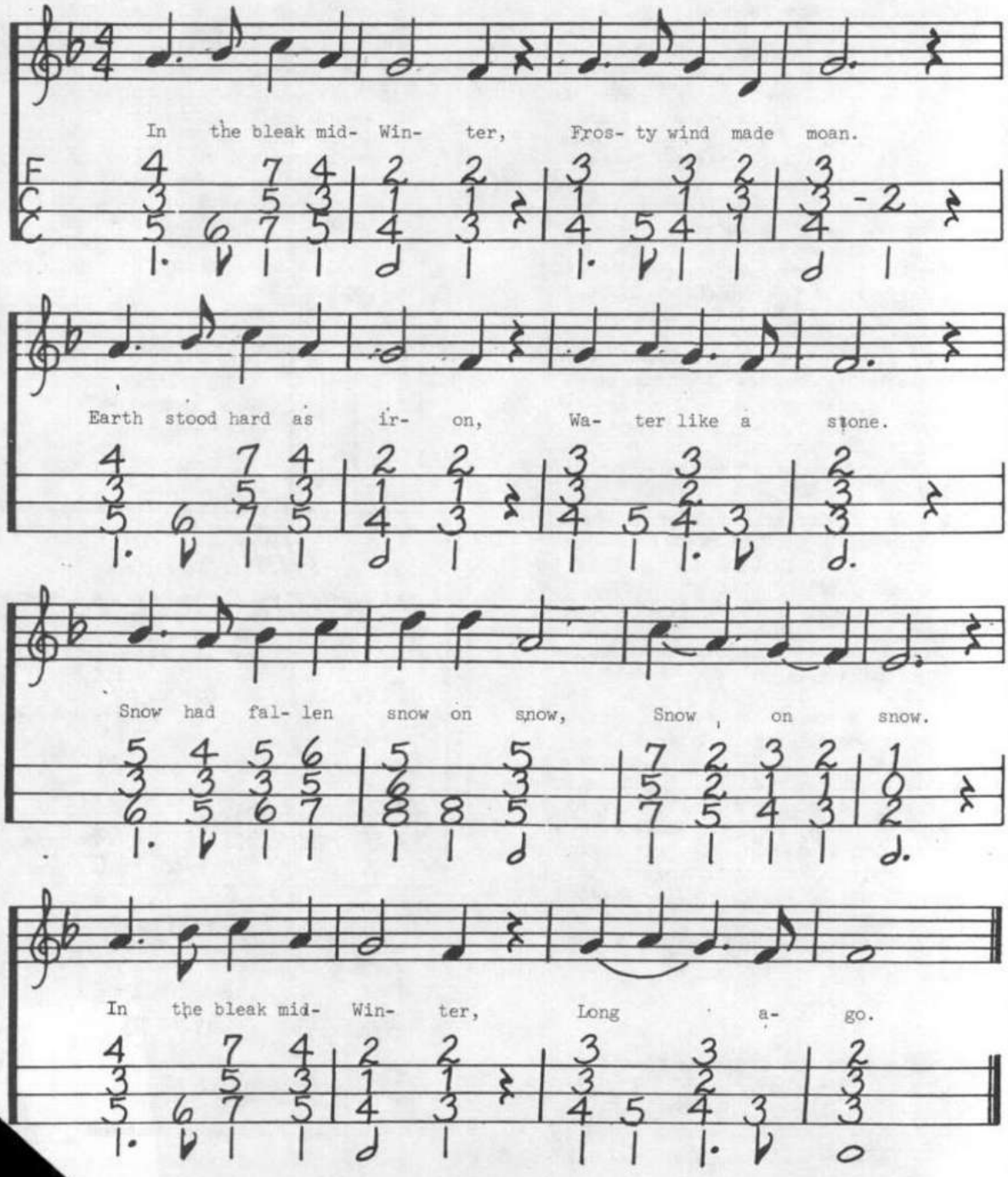


In The Bleak Midwinter

TUNE: Do Sol Sol (F C C)
METER: 3/4

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

GUSTAV HOLST (1874-1934)
Arranged for Dulcimer by
ANNA BARRY



2. Our God, Heav'n cannot hold Him
Nor earth sustain.
Heav'n and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign.
In the bleak mid-Winter,
A stable place sufficed
The Lord God almighty
Jesus Christ.

3. What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wiseman
I would do my part.
Yet what I can I give Him,
Give my heart.

Gustav Theodore Holst was born in Cheltenham (1874) and died in London (1934). He was a trombonist with several orchestras, music teacher at the Royal College of Music and a close associate of the English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams. He composed operas, chamber music, piano pieces, songs and orchestral works, among them "The Planets".

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-Author Unknown

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Barbara Webster

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

When folksy columnist Dot Jackson wrote about Sugar Grove dulcimer maker Leonard Glenn in the Charlotte, N. C. Observer last winter, she mentioned that a Charlotte friend of hers, Barbara Webster, wanted to form some dulcimer classes.

Barbara's phone started ringing, lots of "closet" dulcimer players turned up, and soon Barbara had 15 students in three weekly classes, ranging from "got-mine-for-Christmas-now-how-do-I-tune-it" beginners to some fairly advanced strummers and pickers.

Barbara's not a goose-quill and noter traditionalist. She plays her electric four-string dulcimer (with double melody strings), chords everything and encourages students to do the same. Her music ranges from "Pretty Saro" to her own contemporary compositions - she writes and arranges a lot of music, some professionally, some for fun.

A Knoxville, Tenn. native, Barbara taught herself to play the dulcimer on a borrowed instrument three years ago after graduating from the University of Tennessee with a degree in music theory and composition. Already a polished pianist, she was attracted to the dulcimer as just the right instrument to perform music that UT commissioned her to compose for a college play with an Appalachian setting.

"I shut myself off from dulcimer books and influences and worked out my own tablature and chording," Barbara says. "I think there's a magic to Appalachian mountain music, but there's magic in other music and more progressive playing techniques, too." She favors jazz-mixolydian tunings like C-G-F-C that give that jazzy fourth interval across the melody strings.

Why an electric dulcimer?

"I would be jamming with friends and they'd drown out my acoustic dulcimer. So I took it to a Charlotte guitar repairman and had him copy it in an electric model."

The electric has a solid walnut body with rosewood fingerboard and an ebony rear panel to cover the internal wiring. Barbara smiles and points out that the maker, obviously not a dulcimer expert, copied so closely that a few wrongly-spaced frets on her acoustic also are wrong on the electric. "I've learned to adjust for it," she says.

Ever heard dulcimer played through a phase shifter? Barbara has taped some music using this electronic gizmo that transforms the merest strum into wild, echoing "moon music" -- a long way from "Aunt Rhody."

AN INTERVIEW BY

Floyd Ellington

Professionally, she produces sound-slide shows for such functions as the Charlotte arts fund drive and local college freshman orientation programs. She has taught music composition at the local community college. And she performs with "Jackson, Webster and Mee."

This three-member group includes Fred Jackson, Dot's son, on guitar ("he's great"), Barbara singing and playing dulcimer, and interpretive dancer Mary Ann Mee ("she's marvelous"). Mary Ann does a lovely dance based on the sign language of the deaf, interpreting the words of songs Barbara has arranged and sings to guitar and dulcimer accompaniment. They've been on educational TV and usually perform in churches.

Barbara and her husband, advertising art director Martin Webster, have filled their comfortable house with original graphics, art and house plants, and there's Eeyore, their basset hound. Eeyore sidles to the door, gives visitors a solemn "woof" and waddles back to his bed, duty done.

Barbara is noodling along on a concertina ("the push-pull kind") and I've halfway promised to build her a hammer dulcimer. It would sound spectacular played through the phase shifter.

She's ended her dulcimer classes now -- "after you teach the basics, it gets back to practice, practice, practice" -- and is talking about organizing Charlotte's first dulcimer festival this year. That should flush out some more "closet" players.

Who's Who ~

IN THIS ISSUE

TOM BAEHR ("Bunch of Currants) is the author of a dulcimer book, NEW TUNES/ OLD FRIENDS. SAM MOFFETT ("Chording on the Hammered Dulcimer) toured the eastern United States performing on the hammered dulcimer this Summer. Susan Campbell (Cathy Barton Para interview) is a journalism student/ dulcimer player in Columbia, Missouri. JOHN MOLINEUX ("Plant un Cao") from Brittany did a most successful performing tour of the eastern United States this Summer. His album is DOUCE AMERE/BITTER SWEET. DAN RICH ("Dulcimer Fretboard Measurements") is a computer programer/dulcimer player and builder from Wilmington, Delaware. JIM BURRILL ("Ohio Melody"), a dulcimer player from California, has been a long time friend of the DPN. SETH AUSTEN ("The Keel Row" - guitar part) is part of a fantastic Philadelphia-based band, NOVA. JERRY ROCKWELL ("Fingerpicking on the Mt. Dulcimer") has recently released a cassette tape of his fine dulcimer playing. Jerry's columns are a regular feature of the DULCIMER PLAYERS NEWS. RICHARD BERG ("Dulcimer in the Classroom") is the author of PLAY AND SING THE DULCIMER WAY, a fine instruction book. ANNA BARRY ("In the Bleak Midwinter"), a North Carolina resident, is a very inventive musician who has arranged many lovely melodies for the dulcimer. ROGER NICHOLSON ("Frets") is well-known to DPN readers. He and Jake Walton are touring in the United States during September and October. FLOYD ELLINGTON (Barbara Webster interview) works with a Charlotte, North Carolina newspaper and builds and plays the hammered dulcimer. CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS: Michel Legare, Betty Stuedle and Larkin Bryant. The photograph of Connie North with the article "Dulcimer in the Classroom" was taken by Bonnie Carol.

classified ads

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Reveiws

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THE DULCIMER BOY
AUTHOR: Tor Seidler
PUBLISHER: Viking Press

Not many books are written with a dulcimer as its theme and here is one I can highly recommend. This is a short novel (83p.) with an almost Dickensian feeling, about two brothers who are left on their aunt and uncle's doorstep together with their father's silver stringed hammered dulcimer. An eventful journey unfolds as they have a hard time in their new home. But at the same time the dulcimer provides a source of constant joy. One brother leaves with the instrument and eventually gains fame as the Dulcimer Boy while packing them in at a distant inn. Later, he returns to find his brother and the aunt and uncle living in a slum area. As things go, he is sought by the mayor who had heard him play and the brothers go off with him to give concerts.

Throughout the story, the special qualities of the dulcimer are interwoven with the strong bond between the brothers. The story progresses in a timeless, but familiar world set in New England. I feel this story would be of interest to dulcimer players of any age.

-Erik R. Blomstedt, Director
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SUNDAY AT THE MILL
ARTISTS: Mill Run Dulcimer Band
LABEL: Lark (LRLP-3094)

The Mill Run Dulcimer Band is composed of five musicians who in real life are a soil scientist, a speech pathologist, an English teacher, an electrical engineer and an Air Force officer. Their approach to the traditional music on this album is not quite as varied as their livelihoods. The band utilizes a couple of mountain dulcimers, augumented with guitar, bass, autoharp, a sometimes banjo and a once in a while fiddle. The overall sound produced by this mixture of traditional instruments, plus their fairly solid vocal harmonies, is very pleasantly listenable in a mostly folk vein.

The album mixes instrumental with vocal selections well. The initial tune, "Western Country", illustrates the toe-tapping fun the dulcimer is capable of. "Will the Circle be Unbroken" sounds a good deal like a living room gathering, pleasant but not outstanding vocally. "John Brown's Dream" is played on dulcimer as a three part round, a good addition to the album. "Uncloudy Day" proves a point quite necessary to an album of dulcimer music, i.e., that the musicians can play both fast pieces and slow, melodic tunes. Although this tune is almost a duplicate style of the Simmons Family of Arkansas fame, it comes across nicely with the inclusion of an autoharp and guitar accompaniment.

"Pretty Little Dog" is probably the best instrumental here featuring a very mellow frailed banjo, dulcimer intro; then the whole band pitches in. "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" didn't quite live up to its potential on autoharp although the guitar accompaniment bolstered it considerably. The over-recorded "Ragtime Annie" is just like everybody else's recording. It has a dancing doll for rhythm - nice, but something more original is needed. The four ballads on the album contribute a great deal to it, the best one being "Darcy Farrow". The all-time worst song ever written, "Turn Your Radio On", is actually palatable by the band.

All in all this album is quite commendable for the first album by the Mill Run Dulcimer Band. I hope they do more. I liked this one and hope you will too.

-L. Coats

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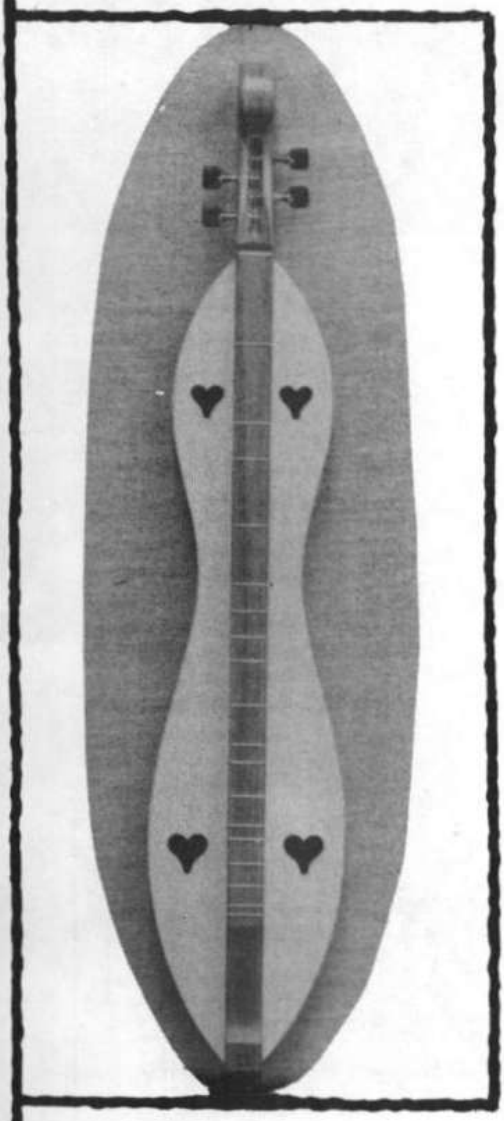

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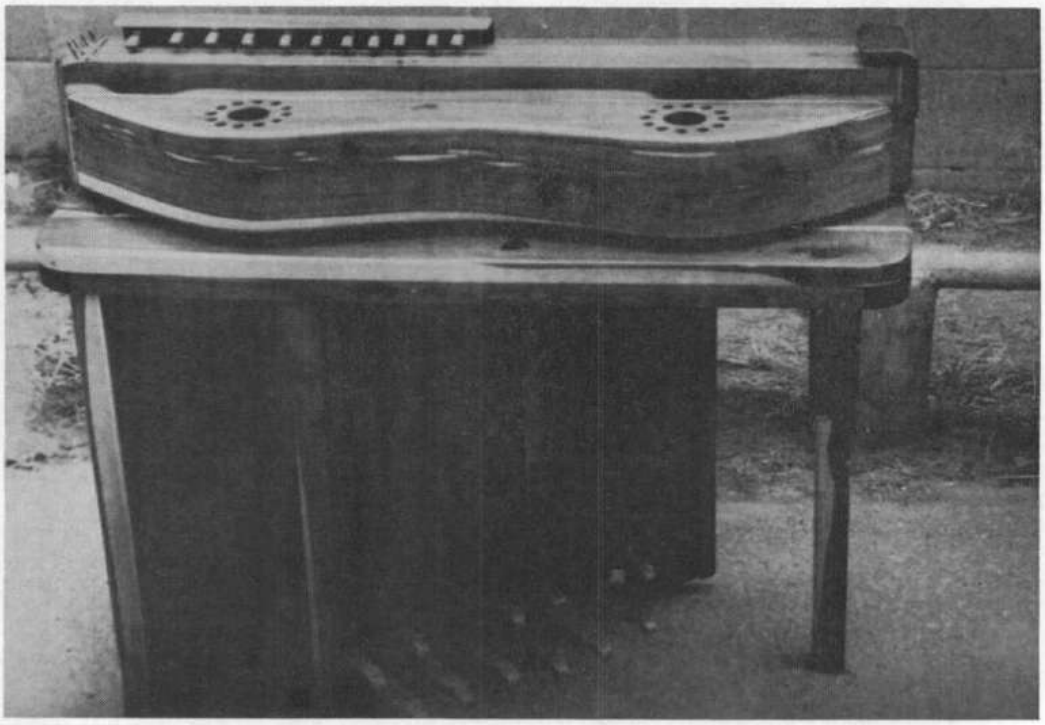

This restoration, just completed, was found in a basement and had been there so long that it had completely separated into all of its component parts. The only thing we know about it is that it was made by a chiropractor in Plainville, Kansas about 50 years ago. It is about 3' long with a scale length of 33". The box is about 4" deep. It is made of cedar.

The fretboard is 3 1/2" wide. The near side is fretted chromatically for two octaves, with long frets in the diatonic positions and short ones otherwise. Only one string is on this side, on which the melody is played. The other side is fretted chromatically to one short of one octave. On this side are five strings which are fretted by stops worked by the pedals in the cabinet below.

....I'd be interested to know if any of your readers have seen anything like this. We may just have here a page in dulcimer history unique to the plains of Kansas.

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